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SUBJECT: Secretary Rice's Meeting with Medellin Mayor
Alonso Salazar Jaramillo

1. (U) January 25, 2008; 10:00 a.m.; Medellin, Colombia.

2. (U) Participants:

United States
The Secretary
Ambassador William Brownfield
Representative Melissa Bean
Representative Eliot Engel
Representative Jane Harman
Representative Alcee Hastings
Representative Ron Klein
Representative Rick Larsen
Representative Solomon Ortiz
Representative Ed Perlmutter
Representative David Scott
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Carolyn Cooley, Embassy Notetaker

COLOMBIA
Medellin Mayor Alonso Salazar Jaramillo
Ambassador Carolina Barco
National Planning Director Carolina Renteria
High Commissioner for Reintegration Frank Pearl

3. (SBU) SUMMARY. Mayor Salazar outlined the Medellin's positive transformation. He detailed the city's development projects, attention to human rights, and investment in social services for the poor and the internally displaced. He also stressed the importance the bilateral Trade Promotion Agreement (TPA) would play in promoting economic growth and support for democratic principles. END SUMMARY.

MEDELLIN: FROM TERROR TO HOPE

4. (SBU) Medellin Mayor Alonso Salazar outlined the city's transition from a narco-capital to a model Latin American metropolitan area in a January 25 meeting with the Secretary and accompanying Congressional delegation. He said the city government's philosophy "for the poorest, the best" governs all development decisions, including the Parque Explora science center, the Metro Cable

transportation system, and school and housing projects. Salazar highlighted plans for improving highways and ports to "bring Medellin closer to the sea" and underscored the importance of foreign investment for continued economic growth and job creation.

5. (SBU) Salazar said respect for human rights is essential to democracy, and Medellin authorities have strongly committed to protect them. He noted that his office finances an independent human rights office, staffed by 30 lawyers, that is open every day of the year to document and investigate cases of human rights violations.

"FREE TRADE IS NECESSARY"

6. (SBU) Salazar voiced concern for the "uncertain future" Medellin would face without the TPA, saying the city would lose critical foreign investment and jobs without it. He stated that, though not a member of the President's party, he believes in Uribe's vision of security, democracy, and economic growth. Salazar reiterated that free trade is "necessary" to promote these goals, which both the United States and Colombia share.

7. (SBU) Representative Perlmutter asked whether the combination of a devalued dollar and free trade might have a negative impact on the city and Salazar acknowledged that the dollar had already impacted the city, but said long-term free trade would increase foreign investment and boost efficiency { helping local entrepreneurs counter the damage caused by the weakened dollar.

SERVICES TO DISPLACED PERSONS

18. (SBU) In response to a question from Representative Harman, Salazar outlined Medellin's services to internally displaced persons. Medellin provides universal health care and education to all its residents, including the displaced. A recent housing project specifically allocated a percentage of homes for the displaced. However, some of the city's poor believe the internally displaced receive a disproportionate share of local resources. With increased income, he said, Medellin could undertake additional long-term development projects to address needs of all its residents, especially the poor and displaced.
RICE